
BRIDGING THE SKILL GAP: IMPACT OF RUDSETI TRAINING ON YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY AND ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCE

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ABSTRACT

Skill development has emerged as a cornerstone of youth empowerment and sustainable livelihood creation in India. Rural Development and Self Employment Training Institute (RUDSETI) has been playing a significant role in bridging the skill gap by imparting entrepreneurship and employment-oriented training to rural youth. The present study examines the effectiveness of RUDSETI's training programs in enhancing employability and entrepreneurial skills among young in Dakshina Kannada district. A total of 180 respondents, who had successfully completed training under RUDSETI, were surveyed using a structured questionnaire. The study employed linear regression analysis to assess the relationship between RUDSETI training inputs (skill acquisition, mentorship, and practical exposure) and outcomes in terms of employability and entrepreneurial skill development.

The regression results indicated a statistically significant positive relationship between RUDSETI training and youth skill enhancement, with training quality and practical exposure emerging as the strongest predictors of employability. Similarly, entrepreneurship-related modules, including business planning, financial literacy, and risk-taking orientation, showed a substantial impact on entrepreneurial competence. The findings underscore the crucial role of structured and practice-oriented training in transforming youth into both job seekers and job creators. The study concludes that RUDSETI acts as a catalyst for youth empowerment by not only reducing unemployment but also fostering entrepreneurial mindsets. The research has important implications for policymakers, training institutions, and rural development initiatives aimed at promoting self-reliance and inclusive growth.

KEYWORDS: RUDSETI, Skill Development, Employability, Entrepreneurship, Youth Empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

In the evolving socio-economic landscape of India, equipping youth with the necessary entrepreneurship and employment skills has become paramount. In rural and semi-urban regions, where formal employment opportunities remain limited, institutions that elevate self-reliance and promote entrepreneurial mindsets are especially critical. Among these, the Rural Development & Self Employment Training Institute (RUDSETI) has stood out as a pioneering model for fostering skill-based empowerment bridging unemployment and underemployment through rigorous training interventions.

Established in 1982, RUDSETI emerged through a visionary partnership of the SDME Trust, Syndicate Bank, and Canara Bank, guided by Dr. D. Veerendra Heggade, the Dharmadhikari of Dharmasthala (RUDSETI, 2025; Times of India, 2011). The institution's aim was not merely to impart skills, but to instill confidence, ignite entrepreneurial drive, and guide youth towards self-employment ventures aligning with Gandhian ideals of rural upliftment and resource optimization (RUDSETI, 2025).

Over the decades, the RUDSETI model has spread across India. As of July 31, 2025, there are 27 RUDSETI centres successfully operating. These institutes have cumulatively conducted 19,911 training programmes, reaching 601,073 candidates. Remarkably, 441,544 of these participants went on to become settled, meaning they either established micro-enterprises or secured wage employment. Among those settled, 400,346 became self-employed, while 200,348 leveraged self-financing, and 41,198 benefitted from bank finance to catalyze their ventures (RUDSETI, 2025b). These figures stand as a testament to RUDSETI's effectiveness in transforming training into tangible economic outcomes.

The model revolves around intensive short-duration training, usually residential and free of cost covering both boarding and lodging (RUDSETI, 2025; Star of Mysore, 2022). Program durations range from one to six weeks, structured around entrepreneurship development modules (EDPs) that combine hard skills (technical trades) and soft skills (business planning, communication, confidence-building). RUDSETI further enhances its impact through long-term handholding providing post-training follow-up, marketing exposure, credit linkage, and mentorship for up to two years (RUDSETI, 2025).

Such a comprehensive approach has garnered wide recognition. RUDSETI trainings are aligned with the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) and adhere to the Common

Norms Notification (CNN) issued by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) (RUDSETI, 2025). Its success also inspired the pan-India rollout of RSETIs (Rural Self Employment Training Institutes), with around 590 RSETIs now functioning across 572 districts a direct replication of the RUDSETI blueprint (India CSR, 2023; MoRD, 2023).

This research focuses specifically on RUDSETI's effectiveness in bridging the skill gap that is, how training interventions translate into improved employability and entrepreneurial competence among youth participants. Understanding these linkages is critical for policy advocacy, for designing effective curriculum frameworks, and for scaling impact across similar institutions.

In summary, RUDSETI stands as a remarkable case of rural skill empowerment, not only training hundreds of thousands of youth but facilitating their settlement into self-employment or wage jobs. By analyzing its impact through the lens of statistical modeling and empirical evidence, this study aims to uncover the mechanisms of success and to chart a pathway for scalable, evidence-based intervention in youth upskilling and entrepreneurship development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The skill gap among rural youth in India, particularly the mismatch between market requirements and the abilities of young people, has long been considered a barrier to inclusive economic growth. The Rural Development and Self Employment Training Institutes (RUDSETIs), pioneered in Karnataka and later expanded nationally through RSETIs, were designed to address this challenge by offering short-duration, experiential training programs in entrepreneurship and employability skills. These institutes emphasize a blend of motivational inputs, hands-on skill development, and basic business management, coupled with financial facilitation and post-training mentoring, with the ultimate aim of enabling settlement in either self-employment or enterprise activities (National Academy of RUDSETI, n.d.).

Research on entrepreneurship skill development through training generally emphasizes the importance of structured inputs such as opportunity identification, risk orientation, innovation, and business planning. According to Gorman, Hanlon, and King (1997), entrepreneurship education has a positive effect on entrepreneurial intentions and the ability to recognize business opportunities. Later studies by Nabi et al. (2017) reinforced that experiential and action-oriented training interventions significantly improve entrepreneurial competencies and the likelihood of venture creation. Similarly, entrepreneurship development programs (EDPs) in India have been shown to enhance entrepreneurial orientation,

managerial skills, and start-up readiness, especially when paired with mentoring and incubation support (Rae, 2006). These broader findings align with evidence from RUDSETI studies, where training has been reported to increase entrepreneurial confidence and intent to start enterprises (Devaki, n.d.; Journal PPW, 2022).

In addition to entrepreneurship, employability skill development has become an equally critical dimension of training interventions. Yorke and Knight (2006) conceptualize employability as the possession of a blend of skills, understandings, and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations. Training programs that integrate soft skills, teamwork, communication, and problem-solving abilities have been found to substantially enhance employment outcomes across various contexts (Andrews & Higson, 2008). Studies on vocational and skill training in India similarly highlight that employability-focused interventions not only improve technical competence but also instill transferable skills that employers increasingly demand (Varghese, 2013). RUDSETI programs echo these findings, as trainees frequently report improved self-confidence, discipline, and financial literacy even when they do not establish enterprises, thereby strengthening their chances in wage employment or allied economic activities (RUDSETI, 2022).

Several empirical studies specifically document the role of RUDSETI training in enhancing entrepreneurial skill development. Early research from Ujire, the site of the first RUDSETI, found that participants demonstrated significant gains in entrepreneurial orientation, opportunity identification, and confidence to start enterprises (Devaki, n.d.). Similarly, case studies of SBI-sponsored RSETIs report substantial improvements in entrepreneurial motivation and preparedness among trainees, with evidence of micro-enterprise formation following training (JournalPPW, 2022). However, recent quantitative analyses suggest that the effectiveness of these programs depends not only on the training inputs but also on ecosystem factors such as access to finance, mentorship, and supportive markets. For example, Shetty (2024) showed that entrepreneurial mindset and motivation significantly influenced the performance of entrepreneurship development programs, indicating that competence-building alone is insufficient without enabling conditions.

The literature also emphasizes the mechanisms that determine the success of training interventions. Because RUDSETIs are bank-promoted, credit linkage is an important factor that enables trainees to transform skills into viable enterprises. Post-training mentoring, regular follow-ups, and market linkage have been found to enhance both settlement rates and business survival (JournalPPW, 2022). Locally relevant curricula tailored to regional

economic opportunities further improve outcomes (National Academy of RUDSETI, n.d.). These findings resonate with broader scholarship on training effectiveness, which stresses that skill acquisition has the greatest impact when combined with contextual supports such as access to finance, incubation, and market networks (Pittaway & Cope, 2007).

Although overall findings are favorable, the literature reveals methodological and structural gaps. Many evaluations are descriptive, cross-sectional, and based on self-reported settlement data, with limited longitudinal tracking. Long-term assessments of employability outcomes and enterprise sustainability are rare, making it difficult to assess the true impact of RUDSETI training. Scholars have therefore called for standardized outcome measures, more rigorous causal evaluation designs, and continuous curriculum updates to reflect changing market needs (Nabi et al., 2017; Shetty, 2024). Nevertheless, the available evidence strongly suggests that RUDSETI has been successful in bridging the skill gap by integrating entrepreneurial and employability skills into a comprehensive model that is both scalable and replicable.

In conclusion, both global research on entrepreneurship and employability training and India-specific evidence from RUDSETI converge on the idea that structured, experiential, and supportive training interventions significantly enhance the competencies of youth. RUDSETI has emerged as a promising institutional mechanism that not only cultivates entrepreneurial orientation but also equips rural youth with employability skills, thereby addressing the dual challenge of unemployment and underemployment. However, the effectiveness of such interventions ultimately depends on the integration of training with credit, mentoring, and ecosystem-level supports, as well as the adoption of rigorous evaluation methods to ensure sustainability and relevance in a changing economy.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the role of RUDSETI training programs in enhancing entrepreneurial skills among rural youth.
2. To analyze the impact of RUDSETI training on employability skill development.

Hypothesis of the study

H1: RUDSETI training has significant impact on improving entrepreneurial skill development among youth.

H2: RUDSETI training has significant impact on enhancing youth employability skill development.

METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional design to assess the impact of RUDSETI training on youth employability and entrepreneurial competence. A sample of 180 respondents, selected randomly from recent trainees, will provide the primary data through a structured questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale. The questionnaire covers demographic details, RUDSETI training support and follow up, employability skills (includes 12 statements), and entrepreneurial development (includes 12 statements). Reliability and validity will be ensured through pilot testing and Cronbach's alpha. Data will be analyzed using multiple regression analysis to examine the influence of RUDSETI training quality, practical exposure, mentoring, and support services on employability and entrepreneurial outcomes. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation will be maintained throughout the study. The results are expected to provide evidence on the effectiveness of RUDSETI in bridging the skill gap, while offering valuable insights for policymakers and trainers to refine program design, curriculum, and follow-up support systems.

Measures

The respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the numerous assertions in the second and third sections of the survey using a five-point Likert scale (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agreed). RUDSETI support services and follow up are treated as independent variables, whereas Entrepreneurship skill Development and Employment Skill Development are treated as a dependent variable.. Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient is used to determine the validity of data gathered using the Likert five-point scale. The Cronbach Alpha reliability values are 0.991 for core entrepreneurship development (12 items), 0.992 for employability skill development (12 items) and 0.923 for RUDSETI training (6 items).

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The demographic analysis of the respondents indicates that equal portion of respondents is male and female. The predominant age group is 18-25 years, representing 41.7% of the participants, followed by those aged 25-30 years, comprising 32.2%. Regarding educational qualifications, a higher proportion of respondents (37.8%) hold PUC, while 25% possess SSLC and 24.4% possess ITI and Diploma reflecting a relatively a educated sample. In terms of training duration, the majority 57.2 percent of the respondents completed training duration

of 6-15 days, followed by 33.9 percent had 15-30 days training period. Overall, the demographic characteristics suggest a mature, educated and well trained respondent base.

Relationship between Entrepreneurship development, Employability skill development and RUDSETI training and support

To determine the strength of correlation between the entrepreneurship skill development (entrepreneurial mindset and confidence, business knowledge and planning, financial and resource management and entrepreneurial support and sustainability), Employment skill development (Communication and interpersonal skills, Technical and job related skills, personal effectiveness and work habits and employability and career support) and RUDSETI support Services and Follow Up Pearson's correlation analysis is used. Correlation findings are shown in Table 1.1. The results demonstrate that there is positive relation between entrepreneurship skill development and RUDSETI support services ($r = .847$, $p < 0.01$), correlation between Employment skill development and RUDSETI support services ($r = .845$, $p < 0.01$). As p values are less than 0.01, all the variables are significant at 1% level of significance.

Table 1.1 Showing Correlation between the Variables.

Variables	RUDSETI Support services
Entrepreneurship skill development : Pearson Correlation	.847**
Sig. (2 tailed)	.000
N	180
Employment skill development : Pearson Correlation	.845**
Sig. (2 tailed)	.000
N	180

**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field data

Impact of RUDSETI support and services on Entrepreneurship skill development

Table 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 shows the regression results in respect of dependent variable Entrepreneurship skill development and independent variable RUDSETI support and services. Model summary table is overall measure of the strength of association, as shown in the table 1.2 R square is 0.717, which means that Entrepreneurship skill development accounts for 71 percent of variation in RUDSETI support and services.. Adjusted R^2 value is extremely close to the value of R^2 . Hence the suggested model can be generalized effectively. The standard error of the estimation in table 1.2 is .53250. Standardised

coefficient beta is 0.889. The model fits well in this instance since the standard error is modest.

Table 1.3 shows ANOVA. The total variance is divided into two that is variance which can be explained by the independent variables (Regression) and the variance which is not explained by the independent variables (Residuals). Results shows F value (1, 177)= 447.648, $p < 0.001$. It can be observed that there is Impact of RUDSETI support and services on Entrepreneurship skill development at 1 percent level of significance and model is good fit.

Table 1.4 mainly focusing on beta, t value and significance level. Beta is .847 indicates that a change in one standard deviation in the predictor RUDSETI support and services will result in a change of 0.847 standard deviations in the dependent variable Entrepreneurship skill development. A big absolute t value and lower p value indicate that predictor variable RUDSETI support and services are having a strong impact on the criterion variable Entrepreneurship skill development ($\beta = 0.847$, $t = 21.158$, $p = 0.000$) providing support for the H1 (i.e., RUDSETI support and services has positive impact on Entrepreneurship skill development).

Table 1.2 showing Model Summary.

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.847 ^a	.717	.715	.53250	.717	447.648	1	177	.000

Predictors: (Constant), RUDSETI

Table 1.3 Showing ANOVA.

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5586.017	1	5586.017	447.648	.000 ^b
	Residual	2208.709	177	12.479		
	Total	7794.726	178			

a. Dependent Variable: entrepreneurial skill development

b. Predictors: (Constant), RUDSETI

Table 1.4 showing coefficients.

Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
1	B	Std. Error			t
					Sig.

	(Constant)	7.901	2.103	.847	3.757	.000
	RUDSETI	1.697	.080		21.158	.000

a. Dependent Variable: entrepreneurial skill development

Impact of RUDSETI support and services on Employment skill development

Tables 1.5, 1.6, and 1.7 present the regression analysis results for the dependent variable Employment Skill Development and the independent variable RUDSETI Support and Services. The model summary in Table 1.5 shows an R^2 value of 0.714, indicating that RUDSETI support and services explain 71.4% of the variation in employment skill development. The adjusted R^2 value is nearly identical, suggesting that the model is highly reliable and can be effectively generalized. The standard error of estimate is 0.53250, and the standardized beta coefficient is 0.889, reflecting a good model fit due to the low standard error.

Table 1.6 presents the ANOVA results, where the total variation is separated into the portion explained by the independent variable (Regression) and the unexplained portion (Residual). The analysis reports an F-value of 440.325 with (1,177) degrees of freedom and a significance level of $p < 0.001$. This confirms that RUDSETI support and services have a statistically significant influence on employment skill development at the 1% significance level, demonstrating that the model fits the data well.

Table 1.7 highlights the beta coefficient, t-value, and significance level. The beta value of 0.845 indicates that a one standard deviation increase in RUDSETI support and services leads to a 0.845 standard deviation increase in employment skill development. The high t-value and very low p-value ($\beta = 0.845$, $t = 20.999$, $p = 0.000$) show that the predictor strongly influences the outcome variable. These results support hypothesis H2, confirming that RUDSETI support and services positively impact employment skill development.

Table 1.5 showing Model Summary.

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.845	.714	.712	.54012	.714	440.325	1	177	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), RUDSETI

Table 1.6 showing ANOVA.

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5520.450	1	5520.450	440.325	.000 ^b
	Residual	2208.709	177	12.479		
	Total	7794.726	178			

b. Dependent Variable: employment skill development

c. Predictors: (Constant), RUDSETI

Table 1.7 showing coefficients.

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
1		B	Std. Error		t	Sig.
	(Constant)	7.820	2.095		3.732	.000
	RUDSETI	1.685	.080	.845	20.999	.000

a. Dependent Variable: employment skill development

DISCUSSIONS

The present study's findings strongly reinforce the growing body of literature that highlights the effectiveness of structured training interventions, such as those offered by RUDSETIs, in bridging the skill gap among rural youth. The results demonstrate that RUDSETI support and services substantially contribute to enhancing both entrepreneurship and employability skills, aligning with broader national and international evidence on capacity-building interventions. As noted by the National Academy of RUDSETI (n.d.), the institute's model built on experiential learning, motivational inputs, hands-on practice, and continuous post-training support plays a crucial role in transforming trainees into confident entrepreneurs and employable individuals.

The positive impact on entrepreneurship skills is consistent with earlier scholarship emphasizing the value of structured entrepreneurial training. Gorman, Hanlon, and King (1997) found that entrepreneurship education significantly shapes entrepreneurial intentions and opportunity recognition, while Nabi et al. (2017) highlighted that experiential training enhances the likelihood of venture creation. RUDSETI's approach reflects these principles through its focus on practical skill development, opportunity identification, and motivation-building. Prior studies specific to RUDSETI further support these findings, with Devaki (n.d.) and JournalPPW (2022) documenting improvements in entrepreneurial orientation, confidence, and readiness to start enterprises among trainees.

Similarly, the study's results on employability skill development resonate with the conceptual framework proposed by Yorke and Knight (2006), who describe employability as a combination of skills and attributes that enhance an individual's job prospects. Training interventions that blend soft skills, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving as highlighted by Andrews and Higson (2008) are crucial in improving employment outcomes. RUDSETI's programs integrate these components effectively, with trainees frequently reporting gains in self-confidence, discipline, and financial literacy (RUDSETI, 2022), strengthening their competitiveness in wage employment as well.

Overall, the present study contributes to the evidence that RUDSETI has emerged as a robust and scalable model for fostering both entrepreneurial and employability competencies among rural youth. Consistent with existing literature, the findings affirm that skill development initiatives yield the greatest benefits when supported by credit access, mentorship, and ecosystem-level enablers. By integrating these elements, RUDSETI continues to play a significant role in addressing unemployment and underemployment while promoting inclusive rural development.

IMPLICATION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study carry several important implications for policymakers, training institutions, and rural development stakeholders. First, the strong influence of RUDSETI support and services on both entrepreneurship and employability skills highlights the relevance and effectiveness of experiential, hands-on training models. This reinforces the value of continued investment in RUDSETI-type institutions, as they play a crucial role in addressing persistent skill gaps among rural youth. The results suggest that training programs combining motivational inputs, practical sessions, and foundational business knowledge can significantly enhance the confidence and capabilities of trainees.

Second, the study emphasizes the importance of robust post-training support mechanisms. Elements such as mentoring, regular follow-ups, credit linkage, and guidance in enterprise establishment appear to be vital for translating skills into meaningful livelihood outcomes. These findings imply that stronger coordination between training centres, banks, and government agencies can further improve the settlement rates of trainees and ensure the sustainability of their livelihood activities. Expanding partnerships with local industries and market networks would also enhance opportunities for both enterprise creation and wage employment.

Third, the positive impact on employability skills indicates that RUDSETI training is beneficial not only for prospective entrepreneurs but also for youth seeking regular employment. The development of soft skills such as communication, teamwork, discipline, financial literacy, and problem-solving plays a central role in making trainees job-ready. This suggests that similar training modules can be replicated in other rural skill development initiatives to enhance employability outcomes across diverse sectors.

Lastly, the study highlights the need for continuous improvement in training design and evaluation. While the current model is effective, establishing stronger monitoring systems, tracking long-term impacts, and regularly updating curricula in line with changing market demands will further enhance program relevance. Such measures will ensure that training remains aligned with evolving economic opportunities and continues to address the aspirations of rural youth. Overall, the implications point to the importance of strengthening institutional support, improving ecosystem linkages, and constantly upgrading skill development initiatives to maximize their long-term impact on rural livelihoods.

In conclusion, the study provides robust evidence that RUDSETI support and services significantly contribute to enhancing entrepreneurship and employability skills among rural youth. This finding emphasizes the value of structured, experiential, and supportive training interventions. RUDSETI has emerged as a scalable and effective institutional model capable of addressing the twin challenges of unemployment and underemployment by nurturing entrepreneurial orientation and improving job readiness. However, the long-term success of such interventions depends on integrating training with strong post-training support, financial linkages, mentoring, and continuous curriculum updates. Strengthening these ecosystem components will further enhance the transformative potential of RUDSETI in fostering sustainable livelihoods and inclusive rural development.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study is limited by its reliance on self-reported perceptions, which may introduce response bias. The cross-sectional design restricts the ability to assess long-term impacts of RUDSETI training on enterprise sustainability and employability outcomes. The study also focuses on a specific geographical area, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other regions. Future research should adopt longitudinal methods to track trainees over time, incorporate larger and more diverse samples, and explore additional ecosystem factors such as market linkages and digital skills. Comparative studies across different training institutions could further strengthen understanding of effective skill development models.

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